

THE FORAY OF THE HENDRIK HUDSON

BY FRANK MACKENZIE SAVILE.
(KARL LELAND)

A TALE OF 84.

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"Now, my good Arthur," answered Desmond solemnly, "don't you think I may know my own business as well as you do? Get this man comfortably into a private ward, and then, but not before, you shall hear all there is to hear. What's the good of arguing about things you don't understand in the least?"

Barr shrugged his shoulders and dropped further discussion. In silence he touched the bell. Back came the two attendants and received their further orders. Desmond added a guttural word or two to the patient, and all three retired stairward. The Finn continued to wave his hand excitedly toward his benefactor as he withdrew upward, and the flow of his grateful words died slowly into the emptiness of the passages. A door shut in the distance. The last echoes of his chattering were still.

Then Barr turned again to his friend. "Now perhaps," said he, "you'll be kind enough to explain yourself. What has this hopeless imbecile been stuffing you with?"

The other looked at him with an air of compassion. He nipped the end of his cigar and spat a shred of leaf into the grate before he answered. The stuff he himself comfortably into the recesses of his armchair.

"What an old, fat-headed, narrow-minded customer you are, Arthur," he began cheerfully. "Ever been out of England yet? No; now I come to think of it, you never have. Well, we'll right all that presently. However, here goes for the romance, if you like to think it so. I swear to you it's gospel truth. I feel it in my bones. The chap couldn't have possibly imagined the thing. Besides, I've heard myself—but that's neither here nor there."

Barr shoved forward the other easy chair and reached for a cigarette. "Well, I'll hear you," he said, "but draw it mild if it's particularly sensational. The practice of medicine doesn't induce a high level of receptivity for the marvelous. Trot out your lie. I'll reserve judgment till afterward."

CHAPTER II.

A STRANGE TALE OUT OF THE NORTH. Desmond looked at his friend for a moment without speaking, puffing great clouds of smoke as he sought a clothing of suitable words for his revelation. Then as the marvels of it swelled in his memory he dashed into it incontinent, forbearing oratory.

"By gum, Arthur, it is a great game! The fellow's name's Lars—Lars Pladja. What d'you think of that? Picture-tongue and pretty original in London, eh? He comes from Skelligen, a village in the district—banged if I remember the district, but it's somewhere in northwest Finland and on the seaboard. There'll be time enough to find out the geographical details. Shortly, his story is this:

"He's a woodman, or rather was when he was at home. He was employed on the estate of a magnate of sorts. I've forgotten his name, too, but it doesn't signify. At any rate, his employer got into some mess with the government and doesn't inhabit his ancestral halls. The government runs the concern on confiscation principles in the old chap's absence.

"This man Pladja spends his time in the forests. Goes for days together among the pines and doesn't see a soul. How he's got to England he has only the ghostliest notion of. Thinks when he was imbecile."

"Oh, he knows he's been dotty, then?" interrupted Barr. "That's a fairly healthy sign at least."

"He knows right enough, but he's as sane as you or I now. Well, he thinks when he was in that state that he wandered on board some ship in Ulmberg, stowed away and got fired out in the port of London. He has some sort of misty reminiscence of being knocked about by a cross-eyed scoundrel on board, but can't remember much. He's got here somehow, that's the main point."

"That certainly seems the main point up to now," agreed Barr.

"Don't interrupt. Now enters the villain of the piece. It seems he married his wife in the face of strong opposition from her people—revanted with her, in fact. Her brother, who seems to have been a particularly atrocious sort of scoundrel, never forgave him. The young woman was fair to look upon, and this deadly brute had hoped to make a bit by offering her to the highest bidder."

"There seems sound commercial fact in that," quoth Barr, "but I speak as a fool on feminine subjects."

"You do. Dry up. Our friend quered this pitch entirely, and his poisonous snake of a brother-in-law never forgave him. Nothing happened for a time, but the other was on the watch. Now we insert the blue lights for the semitransparent touch."

"One day Pladja was eating his grub beside a forest brook—or rather channel, for it was a drought summer—when in one of the pools he sees a metal rod sticking up among the pebbles and sand."

Barr stretched out his legs and guffawed. "Bless your heart, Billy, the beggar's stolen it out of the Arabian Nights! How much for this priceless information?"

"Nothing, you ass. Besides, the beggar can't read. Shut up and let me finish. He sees, as I say, a metal rod and pulls at it."

"Man is naturally a prehensile animal," explained Barr. "His instincts would not permit him to do less."

"Pulls at it," continued Desmond,

paying no attention to this sarcasm, "and up it comes. He finds it's soft metal and of a dull color, but in pulling at it the bends and cracks upon it showed bright. In point of fact it's gold."

"What else?" queried Barr softly. "I could have sworn it."

"At this," went on Desmond excitedly, "he paddled into the water and began to dig and delve for all he was

worth. In a minute or two up came a cup and a little later a necklace. Then, as luck would have it, a cloudburst and thunderstorm came on, down came a deluge, and before he knew what was what the torrent was roaring away ten feet deep."

"The laws of nature are imperious," said Barr. "Water must find its level."

"Well, that didn't put him out at all, because he knew that he could return when the storm was over and scoop in the remainder. He buried the cup and necklace, not wishing to excite suspicion by bursting too much treasure on the community all at once, but the scepter—for that's what it undoubtedly was, by his description—he cut up into little bits and took home. He sold it lump by lump to a money lender, and this old fool let the cat out of the bag."

"So it came to the brother-in-law's ears that his sister's husband had got something worth selling. He came down like a carload of brick. He demanded his share, and our friend very naturally told him to go to the devil. Then this stupendous villain began his tricks."

"It's 'All Baba and the Forty Thieves,' Billy," said Barr stolidly. "You can't get away from it."

"Humbug! This was the way of it: The fellow in charge of the Skelligen estates was apparently just such another brute. He was a relation of the former owner, as far as I can make out. As he was by no means a person

grate to the intelligent peasantry, he had a lieutenant and a couple of dozen soldiers to look after him. These two beauties went to the officer and trumped up some sort of charge against the unfortunate Lars and got him shoved into jail. What they did to him there Lord only knows, but some utter devil-fishness, for there seems no doubt it was there he went off his head."

"Humph!" said Barr unbelievably. "The question is, Was he ever on it?"

"He can't give any detailed account of the matter. All he remembers is that his wife was mixed up in it. It was on seeing her in their hands that something cracked inside him—as he describes it—and he was endowed with the strength of ten. Somehow or other he must have hewed his way out, for the next thing he remembers he and his wife were outside in the forest. After a bit his wife couldn't move any more. He realizes now that she must have died then, but he says he didn't at the time. Directly after that he was alone and tearing through the forest. He must have visited and unearthed his buried treasure in some sort of instinctive way, just as a dog scratches up its bones, for when he was on the ship he found the necklet round his neck."

"Query: Is it the same necklet?" quoth Barr. "Where is it, my most credulous young friend?"

Desmond thrust his hand into his pocket and hung a string of amber beads upon the table. "There you are, my unbelieving Thomas. Now let me go on." And he resumed his tale as Barr examined the gold linked circle.

"He thinks there were a lot of wolves in the forest, and that he played with them and laughed to them from the tree tops, but that may well be a bit of imagination, as you suggest. But that doesn't matter as far as the rest of the story's concerned."

"Hang it, Billy," remonstrated Barr, "don't gag at a wolf or two after swallowing a buried hoard! Let's have the wolves by all means. Most effective touch."

"All right. Grit if you like. You won't put me off it. Now he's in the wildest sort of state at finding I understand him, and he's begged me by all I hold sacred to take him back to his home and give him a chance to see his desire upon his enemies. I told him he was a fool for his pains to wander back to a place where, as sure as eggs are eggs, he'd only be clapped in prison again, and probably a worse thing than before come upon him. But it's no use. It wasn't at first by any means that he let on about this—only as a means of bribing me to take him along. He'd spent himself first in explaining his tale of woe without any allusion to this treasure trove. Now, seriously, what d'you think?"

"I think very seriously indeed," answered Barr. "For I perceive that you and he are lunatics who differ only in degree. Probably in some of his sailor wanderings he picked up this old necklet somehow—perhaps honestly, per-

haps not—and evolved the remainder out of a whisky or vodka heated imagination. But I know you well enough to be perfectly aware that what you call your mind is already made up and that you mean sailing up to Skelligen or whatever the outlandish place may be—to die after this fantastic phantasm of a lunatic's brain. So be it. It'll be a jump anyway. I shall perhaps prevent your getting into the most disastrous kind of scrape, so I'll come. But, O Lord, the blatant absurdity of the business!"

"Well, there you're talking wild, old man," said Desmond, getting up and straddling across the hearth rug. "This isn't the first time by many that I've heard of viking treasure being buried up north. If you come to think of it and consider how those old customers were always sailing south, it's a wonder that more of the stuff hasn't come down the centuries. In my opinion, there's more of it buried than has ever been found."

"That, I should think, is excessively probable," said Barr dryly. "So why go paddling after it in a mountain torrent? Much better form a syndicate of exploration and discovery and send other fools. The Russian government will let you have a concession of all Finland probably for a couple of fivers. What on earth should bring scepters and necklets into the bed of a stream?"

"That's the convincing thing about it," said Desmond. "If the bogmen had only come with a tale of buried treasure, I might have thought with you. But, my boy, it isn't likely he would imagine the stream incident. It's a trifle too improbable unless you consider other testimony. It's just here that history backs him up. It's well known that the old vikings used to bury their special chiefs by turning aside the course of a stream, putting the corpse in a hole in the bed of it and then turning on the tap again. What they did for their chiefs you may be a very considerable part of your income they did for their worldly goods. Gold's more valuable than even herold's carriage. Anyway, I'm going to have a look, see? And you're coming along to call fair. Place the Domini, or must I use force?"

Barr yawned aggressively and looked upon his friend with contemptuous pity. "You always were an enthusiastically dogged ass, Billy," he began, "and I suppose you always will be till you get a good fall. Yes, I'm coming, but if you think—"

Desmond caught him by the elbow and twisted him out of his chair. "There, Arthur, that's quite enough. That'll suffice to relieve your conscience. Come along with me to the club, and then we'll see what sport the town affords. If you preached till doomsday, you wouldn't turn me, so drop it."

He reached his hand over to a peg, lifted down a hat and dumped it on the other's head. Throwing him and his exportations before him, he drove him from the room. The sound of the wordy warfare grew thinner down the passages. The great doors of the hospital swung to. Their attendants finally lost themselves in the swirl of the London traffic. This was the forty conceived and begun.

CHAPTER III.

CENTRALISAND OF WAIL.

A glassy shimen lay upon the face of the waters, dimmed and shivered now and again by little catpaws of the land. The white wings of the Hendrik Hudson were spread, but as often as not flapped idly against the mast when the breeze died, rose and died again. Over the murews of the sound lay a haze, shimmering in the April sun. The white cottages of Vaadbeek and other longshore villages nestled into the green of the beech woods, showing splotchily against the glare. It was a perfect day in a perfect Scandinavian spring.

Barr rolled, stretched himself and then sank luxuriously back into his chair among the cushions. His face expressed a beatitude of content. His cigar smoke curled him like a luscious halo. His yawn concentrated into its expansiveness the languorous delights of seven days of uninterrupted idleness. He blushed upon the Danish shores with a placid sense of proprietorship in their beauties as by right of discovery. He was soaked and surfeited in a warm bath of sun breeze and sunshine. His blood ran within him as wine.

To him entered Desmond from the companionway. A businesslike air and the importance of command lay thick upon him. He barked his orders with no uncertain sound, and the whir of the wheel spokes followed swift upon his words. Before a sudden gust the prow crept round to starboard. The yacht began to nose inland to where Copenhagen showed dim in the mantle of the heat haze, girl with the forest of her shipping.

Barr raised his eyebrows. "Going in, old man?" he queried.

Desmond nodded. "Yes; going to call for an hour."

"You said you shouldn't stop short of Ulmberg. Why this waywardness?" Desmond shrugged his shoulders. "There were all these rumors of war before we came out. Best to hear what's happened, if I can. I couldn't make out what those men meant that we sailed just now. Something about Russia. If we're going to shove our heads into the bear's jaws, we may as well know how we stand."

Barr growled loudly. "If that isn't my luck exactly! Here am I on my first real holiday for two years, and then the blighted emperor of Russia must step in to spoil the whole show. I should have thought my little egg basket might have been spilt without plunging the nations into war. But, no; my luck is the kind that impresses itself upon you with stupendous and carefully thought-out cataclysms. With

any ordinary folk it would have been measles, or a broken arm, or, at most, a shipwreck. With me it's either drop the whole business or a probable five years of a Russian fortress, or, mayhap, a bullet. Well, well, man's born to trouble as the sparks fly upward. I'm sorry my eternal destiny has dragged you into its baneful orbit, Billy."

Desmond laughed and filled his pipe. "All's experience, my boy, even the inside of a Russian prison. Not that I think it'll come to that. We needn't make our men till we hear more certainly. Curl yourself up again and snore peacefully. I'll wake you when we clear for action."

They drifted slowly along, the two knot-aphyr fanning irregularly upon their canvas, and passed into the channel that runs between the island and the blunt spit of land upon which the Danish capital stands. As the chain rattled in the hawse pipe the dingy took the water and Desmond was set ashore. Barr returned happily to his slumbers.

Two hours later he was awakened by the sound of his friend's voice and by the din of the anchor coming home. He was aware as he blinking surveyed his surroundings that the yacht was under weigh again and was creeping out of harbor. She was heading for the Swedish coast. Desmond had returned to his chair and to his eternal pipe, which he was methodically stuffing with birdseye. The grin that usually lurked on his ingenious countenance was lacking. He seemed to be considering something with absolute seriousness and concern. This phenomenon was so entirely foreign to his temperament and customs that Barr sat up to regard him with anxiety.

"How now, Billy?" he questioned. "For goodness' sake, what's up?"

Desmond blew a cloud at him. "Nothing at present. Everything, probably, in the near future. Victoria, queen of Great Britain, and Napoleon, emperor of the French, have conjointly espoused the cause of Turkey. They have notified Nicholas, the Russian, that he is to quit pounding the sons of Islam. Most unjustifiably and unaccountably they have failed to consult me. A rumour must needs ensue. The question is, What about us and our little game?"

"Is war an absolute certainty?"

"Nothing's a certainty, my boy, but the odds are a thousand to one on Nicholas. Is not the man to take that sort of thing sitting down?"

Barr shrugged his shoulders. "How can I say, old man? I risk nothing but my very inconsiderable self. You risk your ship and crew. Certainly it's for you to decide."

"They seem to think our fleet's coming up here, too," mused Desmond. "It would be ripping to see the turn up. Besides, why should an absurd rumor put us from our purpose? Anyway, we've got to decide within ten minutes. When we're opposite Malmö, we must either swing port for home or starboard for the Baltic. Now, which is it to be?"

"In yours to command in peace or war," said Barr. "I don't mind owning that, from a strictly personal point of view, I'm for continuing. The joy and mystery of the quest were just beginning to filter into my veins. But, as I said before, I have no responsibility to brake my opinion. It runs unweighted. Do just what you think best."

Desmond puckered his brows. "I'm hanged if I know what to do. I want to go on, of course, and so do you. But the question is, Are we justified in risking crew and ship?"

"If our fleet's to come up here, these waters will be as safe for us in a week or two as the English channel. The Russ hasn't a faintest chance of sticking up to them. But why don't you consult Jones and one or two of the crew? Of course Pladja will want to go on all the more. He's got chances of endless gore and revenge upon the oppressor. But our men ought to have a say in the matter."

The amateur commanding officer flamed out in Desmond in a moment. "Nonsense!" he snapped. "It's an end of all discipline if you cry to your naval vet nurse every time you want to make a decision. I have it. We'll toss for it." He produced a florin from the depths of his trousers pocket. "You call," he said tersely to Barr, and



"Is war an absolute certainty?" the coin twinkled high into the air. It fell on the spotless decks and rolled in slow circles toward the scupperns. The fate of the foray hung upon a single word.

"Heads!" called Barr, and they both sprang from their chairs and rushed to where the spiral silver disk glittered in the sun. The graven similitude of England's queen stared up at them. Then as Desmond slapped it home again into his pocket, for some reason of instinct rather than of intention, the two men grasped each other's hand. They were no longer merely the pals of a yachting expedition, but captain and lieutenant respectively of a buccannery foray. At least so went the trend of their innermost souls.

Barr broke the silence. "Well, that's a weight off my mind," said he. "Oh, I was in a horrid funk. It would be against us. My stars, how ripping and medicinal I feel! Where's our shill and crossbones? Why wasn't I christened Drake or at least Hawkins? To singe the emperor of Russia's beard, don't you know, or words to that effect. See the headlines in the papers, old boy! First Blood to Britain. Daring Raid by Private Yacht. The Sea Dogs of England Loose Again! Eh, old man? Does that make your sluggish pulses stir?"

Desmond had recovered his everlasting smile, but he grunted deprecatingly before he replied.

"Umph!" said he. "It's much more likely to be: Destruction of Private Yacht in the Baltic. Capture of the Crew. All the Prisoners Sent to the Salt Mines! However, we've decided; so that's the end of it. We aren't at all necessarily going to encounter a Russian man-of-war. They'll be snug inside Cronstadt if they hear a whisper of our fleet coming up. There are no Turkish vessels up this way, so we can't be mixed up in any business till war is actually declared. It's when we get north that there may be trouble. That we'll leave considering till we meet it."

"It'll all depend if war's declared when we get to Skelligen," began Barr. "Of course, if it is and we're discovered, that's the end of it. We can't very well—"

"Can't! Can't!" exploded Desmond. "D'you suppose I'm a perfect fool? There are shotguns and rifles aboard enough to arm the crew. I'd like to see a rabble of Finland sorts stick between our men and what they want if we mean business. I mean going through with this, I can tell you."

"But, good Lord, Billy, you can't stand up to a regiment! Supposing there are soldiers about?"

"Time enough to suppose that when we get there. Now let's drop raising the ghost of every unpleasant possibility that could happen and enjoy ourselves while we may." And as Desmond gave vent to this very proper and inspiring sentiment Mezzies, the Scotch steward, announced luncheon. Leaving, therefore, forebodings for the practicalities of victual, they descended sideward with appetites in no degree impaired by the momentous issues they had been called on to decide.

When they got on deck an hour later, the wind had freshened. The waves were tipped with white, and the yacht was no longer sliding slowly before the breeze, but flying like a kite an hour past the point of Falsterbo. Her prow at last was heading north into the wide expanse of the Baltic.

As the day died down into the sunset the gale freshened, and night found them steering up into the great sea gulf under nearly bare poles, the surges thundering astern and sweeping them along a good 15 miles an hour.

So on through the night they fled and staid not. With the coming of dawn the wind began to drop, though still fresh, and they considered their dead reckoning, for they had held far to eastward for sea storm and land was entirely out of sight.

Jones calculated their position to be about 40 miles south of the island of Gotland. They had to decide whether to pass it east or west. East was no doubt safer. And in tempestuous weather safer. On the other hand, it brought them nearer the Russian coast and within reach of Russian cruisers.

Jones, the sailing master, thought fit to put in a judicious word. "In case of trouble, sir, inside Gotland would be most convenient."

That decided it. Desmond rounded on him with all the exasperation born of good and unbecoming advice.

"In case of trouble, Mr. Jones! Great heavens! What trouble?"

"Well, sir, they say—"

"Who say? And what?"

"Well, sir, it was hinted by a man on the quayside at Copenhagen to Murphy, the coxswain there, that war was imminent."

"War imminent!" stormed Desmond. "War's going on! We're not a Turkish gunboat, but an English yacht."

"No, sir, but they say that England and France—"

"Thank you, Mr. Jones. If we're to run this cruise according to the fat-headed imaginations of every dockside loafer who nips his secondhand opinions, I'll let you know. At present when I want advice I'll ask for it. Outside passage, please, Mr. Jones, and stand well out to eastward," delivering which command, with great show of imperious discipline, Desmond returned along the deck to his companion. He had a good deal of the air of a Cockin China who has had his feathers ruffled by an absurd disagreement with a hantam.

This again was the fate of the foray decided by a triviality, this time simply the officiousness of a well-meaning and perfectly well-advised old seaman. All that day they swung along, meeting only a couple of merchantmen under Swedish colors and, as they drew nearer the Gotland coast, a country boat or two. The early dark was just beginning to fall as they sighted two vessels to starboard, one much nearer than the other and on to the Swedish coast.

As they drew near the first one the yacht showed English colors. In answer the stars and stripes crept up the stranger's flag halyards, and to the English hall came the reply:

"Jemina of New London, Bremen to Stockholm. Russian gunboat astern. Think war is declared with England. We have contraband."

Jones slapped his leg and shouted triumphantly. "That's the trouble I spoke of, sir."

"Well, Mr. Jones," snapped the exasperated Desmond, "what if it is? D'you think I'm to be stopped by a twopenny halfpenny Russian gunboat? If war is declared, I shall stop and take her."

"Excuse me, sir," said the skipper, with dignity. "You hold no commission to levy war. Neither I nor the men signed no combatants."

It is impossible to say what reply Mr. Jones' pusillanimity would have evolved. Desmond's mouth was agape with winged words, which in another moment would have been flitting euphorously round the skipper's head. At that moment a rending crash peened across the waters from the other ship. He wheeled about and looked toward

her and saw that disaster had befallen. Her deck was littered with splinters, cordage and flapping canvas. Her fore topmast had given under the press of sail. She lay a prey to the Russian as easily as a shot wild duck to a retriever.

Desmond swore aloud. "Well, my fine fellow, you've got to fight now. Being us alongside and let's hear the rights of the case."

Jones spread out his hands and began to stammer. "I must protest!"

Desmond rounded on him like a flash. "May I remind you that I have a beard of trade certificate and am master of this vessel? By gum, if you don't bring us alongside in two shakes of a dog's tail, I'll have you in irons for mutiny, you lily-livered cook!"

They slid up to within three score fathoms of the other vessel. Mr. Jones' expressions were varied and peculiar and his glances astern numer-



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ous. But Desmond was a very vivid actuality of unpleasantness beside him, while the Russian only loomed distantly astern. He gave in with a bad grace. It must be owned, but with a well considered weighing of the chances of immediate discomfort.

"Can we help?" bawled Desmond as they bobbed about. "Shall I send aboard?"

A red bearded, blue-eyed skipper came to the side and shouted back with melancholy gratitude: "Thanks many, mister. Too late, I'm afraid. She'll be on us in quarter of an hour. She called fathom for fathom with us before. We can't get repaired in time. But don't you get mixed up in our dust. Cut your lucky and show your heels."

"Let me take you off," suggested Desmond.

The other flushed a fine color and spat contemptuously into the sea.

"Not by no manner of means," he replied. "She's only a dispatch boat. Only one gun, not much better than a signaler. Let her board and chance it. We've got 40 cases of rifles and 30 tons of powder, so I shall let her. We're a couple of passengers, though—no scratched his head—but that's no good either. They'd see them and chase you and come back to us. I reckon they want them as much as the other. I'm going to let her, but don't you get into trouble."

Desmond squealed for joy. "If you're going in to win, I'll be entirely delighted if I don't stand by. I've got a signaler. Let me put six pounds of lead into her forefoot and surprise her weak nerves. She'll throw up the game if she sees we mean business."

"You ain't got a letter of marque, you see," said the merchant skipper, scratching his head for the second time. "and you don't know for certain that war's declared. You'll have to let her start, and then you can defend. But don't come on privatering tricks." And he returned to urging on his crew to their exertions with the deck litter, using a wealth of most polite invective.

Desmond massed his men aft, and, quelling intervention on the part of Jones with a fiery glance, he addressed them in patriot wise. He put the case before them with bluntness. Here was a good civilized American ship at the mercy of a score of half-tamed Tartars. Were they to leave her to be taken and her crew to rot in Russian prisons? Were they to become the talk of every dockside from the Tyne to the Liffey as the white-headed lot who saw friends being pounded and sneaked out of the row? No! Perish the thought! He'd arms aboard, and all would do their duty as English seamen. Mr. Mezzies would supply applicants with a glass of grog all round. Then they'd stand by to whip any and all the interfering Russians ever whelped.

A wild cheer rose as he concluded, and a simultaneous rush was made to the steward's quarters, where teats of victory received full acknowledgment.

Then the little brass 6 pounder that had hitherto acted as ornament alone, save on foggy nights, was uncovered, sponged out and loaded. Rifles and shotguns were handed round and below the deadlights screwed in. With an air of impudent unconcern the little yacht bobbed about within 100 yards of her consort, waiting what should betide.

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[TO BE CONTINUED.]